

VZCZCXRO5221
OO RUEHAST RUEHBC RUEHBI RUEHCI RUEHDA RUEHDE RUEHGI RUEHJS RUEHKUK
RUEHLH RUEHPW RUEHROV
DE RUEHNE #1008/01 0981337
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O 071337Z APR 08
FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1251
INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE
RUCNISL/ISLAMIC COLLECTIVE
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEIDN/DNI WASHINGTON DC
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 6261
RHMFISS/HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 7660
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RHMFISS/HQ USSOCOM MACDILL AFB FL
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 NEW DELHI 001008

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

DEPT FOR SCA/INS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [SOCI](#) [TBIO](#) [IN](#)

SUBJECT: CONGRESS TINKERS WITH CABINET, NO DRAMATIC CHANGES

11. (SBU) Summary and Comment: Prime Minister Manmohan Singh reshuffled the second tier of his cabinet on April 6, inducting seven new Ministers of State. (Note: Minister of State is approximately the Deputy Secretary level in the USG. End Note.) Six of the seven are Congress MPs while the seventh is from Congress ally Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD). The risk-averse Congress decided against any sweeping policy changes with the reshuffle, and this was not a massive generational changing of the guard. However, two of the seven are young rising stars in the party, Jyotiraditya Scinda (37) and Jitin Prasada (35). Two heavily rumored changes did not happen: popular young Rajasthan MP Sachin Pilot was passed over, and Minister of Human Resource Development, Arjun Singh, retained his position. Ultimately, the new appointments signal neither a major shift in the Congress Party's power structure, nor the revival of its struggling electoral fortunes. As one longtime political observer put it, "The changes are less than cosmetic." End Summary and Comment.

12. (U) Biographies of the seven new Ministers of State follow.

M.S. GILL - (Independent Charge) Minister of State for Sports and Youth Affairs
Rajya Sabha, Punjab, Congress Party

M.S. Gill (72) was tapped to serve as the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government's Minister of State (Independent Charge - this means Gill will not be directly below a full Cabinet Minister) for Youth Affairs and Sports. Gill began his civil service career in 1958 when he joined the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) from Punjab. As an IAS officer, Gill served in many positions including as the Secretary in the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives and in the Department of Chemicals, Petrochemicals, and Pharmaceuticals.

In 1993, he joined the Indian Election Commission where he was promoted in 1996 to be the Chief Election Commissioner. It was during his tenure as Commissioner that India switched to electronic voting machines and political parties began advertising on television and radio during campaigns. He served as Chief Election Commissioner until 2001.

Gill has authored a book, "An Indian Success Story: Agriculture and Cooperatives in Punjab" and served on a World Bank project on agriculture and infrastructure in Nigeria between 1981 and 1984. Gill has a passion for mountaineering and was coached by Sherpa Tenzing Norgay who climbed Mt. Everest with Sir Edmund Hillary. He was also the president of the Indian Mountaineering Foundation.

JYOTIRADITYA SCINDIA - Minister of State for Communications and Information Technology
Lok Sabha, Madhya Pradesh, Congress Party

Jyotiraditya Scindia (37) was assigned to be the Minister of State for Communications and Information Technology. Scindia is an elected member of the Lok Sabha from the Guna constituency in Madhya Pradesh. The scion of the royal family of Gwalior, Jyotiraditya entered politics following the death of his father, veteran Congress leader Madhavrao Scindia. Scindia's family is politically bifurcated; his Aunt, Vasundhara Scindia Raje, is the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Chief Minister of Rajasthan. Articulate and a good orator, Scindia is an active participant in parliamentary debates covering topics ranging from the economy to foreign policy and the environment.

One of the younger members in the Lok Sabha and a close Embassy contact, Scindia earned a bachelors degree from Harvard and an MBA from Stanford. After graduation, he interned with the UN and later worked as an investment banker for Merrill Lynch and Morgan Stanley. He also set up his own investment firm in Mumbai called Scindia Investments Private Limited. Scindia is an avid sportsman and sharpshooter. He

NEW DELHI 00001008 002 OF 003

is married to Priyadarshini Raje Gaekwad of the erstwhile royal family of Vadodara. They have two children, a twelve-year-old son and a five-year-old daughter.

JITIN PRASADA - Minister of State for Steel
Lok Sabha, Uttar Pradesh, Congress Party

Jitin Prasada (35), one of the prominent young faces of the Congress Party, was inducted as a Minister of State for Steel. A first-timer in the Lok Sabha, Prasada represents the Shahjahanpur constituency in Uttar Pradesh. Prasada is the son of the late Congress leader Jitendra Prasada, who served as Vice President of the party as well as Political Advisor to Prime Ministers Rajiv Gandhi (1991) and P.V. Narasimha Rao (1994-96).

Prasada studied at The Doon School in Dehradun, Uttarakhand. He earned his bachelors degree from the prestigious Sri Ram College of Commerce at Delhi University. He also earned an MBA from the Indian Management Institute in New Delhi. Prior to politics, Prasada worked at DSP Merrill Lynch and BPL Net, an information technology company.

SANTOSH BAGRODIA - Minister of State for Coal
Rajya Sabha, Rajasthan, Congress Party

Santosh Bagrodia (68), an industrialist-turned-politician, was appointed Minister of State for Coal. Bagrodia, a third term Rajya Sabha member, is a party fundraiser and represents the wealthy Marwari community of Rajasthan, where assembly elections are due in November 2008. Bagrodia has been critical of the UPA government's Special Economic Zone (SEZ) policy and even lent support to the opposition and Left parties' criticism of the Special Economic Zone Act.

Born in Kolkata, Bagrodia studied commerce at St. Xavier's

College. He joined the Congress party in 1975. After a decade of organizational assignments, he was elected to the Rajya Sabha for the first time in 1986. Thereafter, he was nominated in 1998 and again in 2004. Besides being the chairman of the standing committee on industry, he is also a member of the consultative committees on civil aviation and consumer affairs.

RAMESHWAR ORAON - Minister of State for Tribal Affairs
Lok Sabha, Jharkhand, Congress Party

Rameshwar Oraon (60) was named Minister of State for Tribal Affairs. A retired Indian Police Service (IPS) officer, Oraon was first elected in 2004 as an MP from the Lohardaga constituency of Jharkhand. Prior to that, he served as Additional Director General of Police in Jharkhand.

Holding a doctorate in Economics from Patna University, Oraon joined the IPS in 1970. He shot into the national limelight as the police officer who, on orders from the then-Chief Minister Lalu Prasad Yadav, arrested BJP leader L.K. Advani in 1990 when Advani was on his Rath Yatra (chariot tour) to the temple town of Ayodhya. In Parliament Oraon was a strong advocate of the new Forest Rights Bill (passed in 2007) and he consistently asserted that tribals and forests were "inseparable." Oraon presides over several sports organizations, with games ranging from hockey to more obscure ones such as Wushu, a Chinese martial art and tug of war game.

U.V. NARAYANASAMY - Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs and Planning
Rajya Sabha, Puducherry, Congress Party

U.V. Narayanasamy (61), a Congress party loyalist, was named

NEW DELHI 00001008 003 OF 003

Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs and Planning. A senior parliamentarian, Narayanasamy has served as the party's Chief Whip in the Rajya Sabha and sits on several parliamentary panels. A lawyer by profession, Narayanasamy was elected to the Rajya Sabha in August 1985 and again in 1991. His seniority and trustworthiness were two strong points that made the party leadership nominate him again in 2003. Narayanasamy has also successfully headed the Puducherry unit of the Congress Party for several years. The party rewarded him in 2006 by appointing him to the position of National General Secretary.

Narayanasamy studied arts at the Tagore Art College in Puducherry and law at the Madras Law College. He practiced law for several years before entering politics. He is also president of the All India Backward Classes Employees Federation.

RAGHUNATH JHA - Heavy Industries and Public Enterprises
Lok Sabha, Bihar, Rashtriya Janata Dal

Raghunath Jha (69), a senior parliamentarian in the Lok Sabha, was tapped to be Minister of State for Heavy Industries and Public Enterprises. Jha represents the Bettiah constituency of Bihar as a member of the Rashtriya Janata Dal Party (RJD). The RJD is a key alliance partner in the current UPA government. Jha entered politics in the 1960s as a Socialist Party leader before switching to the Congress Party. In 1972, he won a Bihar Legislative Assembly seat as a Congress Party member, which he held for 28 years. During his political career, Jha switched party affiliation a number of times. After leaving the Congress Party, he moved on to the Janata Party, then to the Janata Dal-United, and finally to Lalu Prasad Yadav's RJD Party. In 1999, Jha

entered Parliament from the Gopalganj constituency in Bihar. Currently, he is the Vice President of RJD.

Born into a Maithili Brahmin family in Bihar, Jha actively participated in student politics and was inspired by Congress-socialist leaders like Jai Prakash Narayan and Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia. He was a close associate of former Prime Minister Chandrashekhar.

13. (U) Outgoing Cabinet members include:

-- SURESH PACHOURI (Parliamentary Affairs)

His Rajya Sabha term expired and he was recently appointed State Congress Committee Chief in Madhya Pradesh, which will hold state elections later this year.

-- DASARI NARAYAN RAO (Coal)

Had been Congress Party Campaign Committee Chairman in Andhra Pradesh during the 2004 elections and may be used for party work in the state.

-- T.SUBBARAMI REDDY (Mines)

Previously served as Media Director for the All India Congress Committee and may return to that role.

-- M.V. RAJASEKHARAN (Planning)

His Rajya Sabha term expired.

-- AKHILESH DAS (Steel)

-- MANIKRAO GAVIT (Home)

DEIKUN